

**Current Volunteers****Castolon**

Lewis and Susan McCool—Camphosts (3rd)  
 Bonnie Winslow—Camphost (1st)  
 Ted Griffith—Visitor Center (1st)  
 Charlotte Whitesides—Visitor Center (2nd)  
 Jeanette McKinney—Visitor Center (1st)  
 Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (8th)  
 Daisy Welch & Steve Blythe—Maintenance (3rd)

**Chisos Basin**

Ed Davis—Camphost (9th)  
 Jim and Mary Lynn Murrell—Camphosts (5th)  
 Phil and Peggy Spruell—Visitor Center (2nd)  
 John & Cyndee Perry—Visitor Center (1st)

**Panther Junction**

Elaine & John Jonker—VaRP River (7th)  
 Joan Spalding—ScRM (1st)  
 John & Delona Roth—ScRM (2nd)  
 Larry & Julie Brabec—Maintenance (1st)  
 Bob & Pam Bono—Maintenance (1st)  
 Sonia DeYoung—ScRM (1st)  
 Karren Brown—Administration (1st)

**Persimmon Gap**

Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (17th)  
 Jim & Marlene Hufford—Visitor Center (4th)

**Rio Grande Village**

Amy Gibson—Backcountry (2nd)  
 Walt Lemonovich—Backcountry (3rd)  
 Mike and Nancy Coe—Backcountry (5th)  
 Walt Oglesby & Louise Jewell—Camphosts (1st)  
 Dave England—Camphost (1st)  
 Dennis Hanson—Visitor Center (1st)  
 Bonita Auman—Visitor Center (1st)  
 Linda Jarvie—Maintenance (2nd)

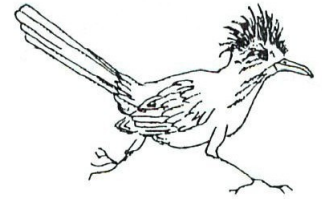
**Resident and remote volunteers**

Reine Wonite—Park Videographer (11th)  
 Stacy Sirotnak—SCA ScRM  
 Jim Bishop—BBNHA  
 Mark Williams—VaRP  
 Laurie Meadows—VaRP

\* Number in ( ) indicates years of service

**Interview with  
Rick Roberts**

By Jane Brown



We will be bidding Ranger Rick Roberts adieu shortly as he is retiring this month. Ever since coming to Big Bend NP, I have enjoyed Rick's support of the volunteer program, so I wanted take this opportunity to interview him prior to his departure.

Rick began working for the National Park Service in 1987 as a seasonal at Blue Ridge Parkway. His next stop was at Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area on the Cumberland Plateau. He gained permanent status at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in NC. His next tour of duty was at Chiricahua National Monument and Fort Bowie National Historic Site, followed by Everglades National Park and finally Big Bend National Park.

When asked about his support of the volunteer program, Rick said, "It became clear to me early on that you have individuals who have a true love for the Park Service. Perhaps as a result of a childhood experience, these folks are willing to come and basically work for free which really impressed me. Volunteers have been such an integral part of my experience. They have helped me with my job throughout the years and I believe I've become a better ranger due to these experiences. Volunteers are not only beneficial to the NPS, they contribute enormously to the visitor experience as well. I continue to be amazed at the passion and heart-felt enthusiasm that these volunteers have for the parks they work in. "

When asked if he had a "favorite" volunteer, Rick said that "Karen and I have become good friends and kept in contact with several volunteers throughout the years. Several have visited us in the Everglades and here at Big Bend." While at Chiricahua NM, he and Karen became really good friends with Ralph and Marion Miller. The Millers were witnesses at their wedding in the park, since neither Rick's or Karen's family was able to attend. Remarkably the Millers, both in their 80's, drove to Castolon to visit the Roberts' during their first year here at Big Bend.

When asked about the element of his job that he enjoyed the most, Rick said that he feels most strongly about protecting the resources. A few of the more fulfilling cases I've been a part during my career include a case involving rattlesnake poaching and an ARPA (Archaeological Resources Protection Act) case where I caught two individuals actively digging for cultural artifacts at Fort Bowie NHS. He is proud to have had a hand in helping preserve resources that his niece's and nephew's children will be able to enjoy for years to come. Living and working in a place that most people only get to vacation in is a great privilege. He also has enjoyed all the interesting people that he has worked with and met in the parks including co-workers, volunteers, visitors, and his wife who he met at Cape Hatteras NS. This job has allowed me to watch whales 50 yards off the beach, loggerhead turtles laying their eggs in the sand, new bear cubs following after their mother, coati with their young riding on their mother's backs, and the indescribable experience and excitement of watching a mountain lion make a kill within twenty-five feet of me. Memories that will last forever. I asked him if he had any special plans for his retirement and he replied, "Karen (his wife) has sacrificed so much following my career it's time for me to be as supportive in her career as she has been for mine and I'm looking forward to the next park we head to for her career. He is anticipating the next chapter, but thinks it will take eight or ten months to figure out what that chapter will be. In the meantime he hopes to go skiing this winter, do a lot of fly fishing this summer, and of course brew beer.

## Hiking at Big Bend as a New Volunteer

By Larry Brabec, Maintenance VIP

Guess I'll start with our first hike in November. There were some lessons learned on that one. The hike itself, labeled "Daniels Ranch to Hot Springs Trail", was listed as a moderate hike, distance 6 miles round trip. My first mistake was assuming that my wife, Julie, would have the same physical stamina that I have. I was also unaware that there is a temperature difference of 10+ degrees between where the trail is located and where we call home (Panther Junction).

The hike starts off at an elevation of 1850', tops out at around 2200', before heading down to 1850' at the Rio Grande. Then, after soaking in the hot springs, it's back to your starting point. Doesn't sound bad until you get past the half way point of the first leg and directions are all but non-existent. Having gotten a late start, it warmed up quickly. Come the two mile mark according to my portable GPS unit, I started to become a little concerned about Julie as her face started to flush up. We made more frequent stops and I had her drink more water, which meant I was drinking less.

With only a partially worn trail as a guide, I became more concerned as Julie is now suggesting we should turn around and head back. I didn't see that as an option. By now we could see the Rio Grande (water), and I figured the worst case scenario was we could at least cool off our bodies. We pushed on and finally ran into a sign informing us we had a quarter mile to go. Once there we relaxed, drank and ate.

Now the trip back. Righttttttttttt. We had the good fortune of running into another volunteer who gave us a ride back to the truck. Lessons learned: we stuck to the easy trails for the next couple weeks, purchased Julie her own backpack so she could carry her own water and we let our neighbors know where we plan on hiking.

Our last hike was Slick Rock Canyon at 8.7 miles, 6+ hours.

## NOT A SERVICE THAT WE PROVIDE

By Mike and Nancy Coe, GRCA Victors and  
Big Bend NP East District Backcountry VIPs

You learn so many things volunteering in various parks. It is a pleasure to share one of our favorite stories.

We became “Victor” volunteers (a very specific assignment helping the Law Enforcement Division) one season at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. We had such a busy and enjoyable time we went back for more and enticed two of our favorite people, Kenn and Linda Sutton, to work one season with us as our corresponding “Victor” colleagues. With 5 million visitors per year at the South Rim, there are amazing and incredible stories of “the things that visitors do.” Just getting folks to park properly was a daily issue. One of the Victor duties was to help educate drivers, discourage poor choices, or red tag improperly parked vehicles.

Egregious parking errors were brought to the attention of other visitors via “red tags” stuck to the vehicle windshield or side window. They resemble, but are not, tow tags. They are not tickets. They really are warnings to the particular vehicle operator and everyone else that drives by. The tags get the violator’s attention when they try to tear it off. Removal often results in a bit of sticky residue.

We had an instance of a particularly outrageous parking issue near the famous El Tovar Hotel, resulting in a prominent red tag with “the full sticky” placed by us Victors.

Ranger Miller happened to be patrolling the parking area when the visitor returned to his car. The visitor was not happy. Neither was Ranger Miller when she saw the parking violation. The visitor flagged her down to complain, insult her, and make demands. Ranger Miller, the consummate professional, smiled, nodded, and never gave an inch. The visitor’s final request to her was for her to remove the red tag from his windshield. Ranger Miller never lost a breath or blinked; she simply replied, “Sir, that is not a service we provide” and left him to his own devices. Best line ever....

Things to remember when you are at Big Bend National Park

by Jane Brown

I look at my feet when I’m walking. I also stop walking if I want to look around to admire the scenery. Tripping on rocks is an all too common occurrence here at Big Bend! I learned this the hard way!

My little flashlight is very handy, but somehow in Big Bend at night, it seems like a tiny little flicker of light. This is one dark place; in fact, it really is one of the darkest places in the United States. Be prepared for the dark with a big flashlight and don’t leave home without it!

All park employees, including volunteers, should always look professional, and therefore need to have neat, clean uniforms which meet the NPS uniform standards. Only wear your volunteer uniform when you are on duty. Do not wear your uniform out of the park unless you are driving a shuttle. Never wear your volunteer uniform in a park where you are not currently signed up as a volunteer. Do not wear bits and pieces of your uniform. It is an all or nothing situation.

If you decide to go hiking by yourself, let someone know where you are going.

Learn more about volunteering in the national parks at [www.npsvipnetwork.org](http://www.npsvipnetwork.org). You can read about other volunteers’ experiences at various parks and even add your own or join the Big Bend VIP group on Facebook.



## Look who came to Spring Orientation!

There were many new faces in the park as the new spring volunteers arrived for Orientation, which began on January 20.

# Here is the lineup!

**Walt Oglesby and Louise Jewell** arrive to take over duties at the Rio Grande Village campground for the spring. They hail from Blowing Rock, North Carolina but spent late summer of 2013 at Fort Craig Historic Site (BLM) near Socorro, New Mexico, which was their first volunteer experience. They visited Big Bend NP last winter and fell in love with the place.

**Dennis Hanson**, who has also volunteered at Gila Cliff Dwellings, Aztec Ruins National Monument, and Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge (near Charleston, SC) will be the new visitor center host at Rio Grande Village.

**Bonita Auman** will also be hosting at the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center and comes to us from Spring Mills, Pennsylvania. She has worked previously as a fee collector at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and will be accompanied by her husband, although he does not plan on volunteering.

**Bonnie Winslow** joins us as the Cottonwood Camphost for the spring. She worked for NPS for 22 years in Interpretation, Visitor Services and Law Enforcement. She switched to BLM at the end of her career, working in public affairs. Bonnie retired three years ago and joined the volunteer world, dividing her time between Oklahoma and the southwest.

**Karren Brown** will be assisting the Administrative Staff this spring. She retired from the park service in 2006 as superintendent (Cape Lookout NP and Lake Meredith NRA). She currently lives in Elizabethtown, KY, worked at Big Bend NP in the 80's and still "loves the place". She is looking forward to doing "anything that doesn't require decision-making" while she is here this spring!

**Charlotte Whitesides** and her friend **Jeanette McKinney** will be manning Castolon Visitor Center beginning in February. Charlotte and her husband, Bob, volunteered at Big Bend NP in 2007 and in the intervening years, her husband passed away. However, she rounded up a recruit to accompany her for an encore appearance and we are glad to have her back. Both Charlotte and Jeanette spend most of their time in Giddings, Texas, 55 miles east of Austin. They are accompanied by Charlotte's little dog.

**Ted Griffith** will be volunteering at Castolon Visitor Center and comes to us from Denton, Texas. He will be accompanied by his wife, Heather, but she isn't planning on volunteering. He retired from law enforcement and is looking for a change of pace. This is his first experience volunteering in a national park.

**Bob and Pam Bono** will be joining us as assistants in the Maintenance Division. They are from Ebensburg, Pennsylvania where Bob retired from the Marine Corps and Pam was a guidance counselor. The couple has participated in many Habitat for Humanity "builds".

The returning volunteers show up around Feb. 1. They include Mike and Nancy Coe (Backcountry East District), Walt Lemonovich (Backcountry East District), Lewis and Susan McCool (Cottonwood Camphosts), Phil & Peggy Spruell (Chisos Basin Visitor Center), Jim & Mary Lynn Murrell (Chisos Basin Camphosts), Linda Jarvie (RGV Maintenance for Feb., then Chisos Basin Camphost), John and Delona Roth (ScRM). Then there are the folks who are relocating within the park: Daisy Welch and Steve Blythe moving from East District Backcountry to Castolon Maintenance, Dave England from Chisos Basin Visitor Center to Rio Grande Village Camphost and Jim and Marlene Hufford from Panther Junction Maintenance to Persimmon Gap Visitor Center (although Jim will continue to travel to PJ to continue his work with Maintenance).

# *Where are you going to....?*



**Riley and Karen Caton** are going to Bahia and try out dry camping for a few days. Their summer plans include a leisurely trip to Alaska in their RV, which they are very excited about.

**Bob Douat** can't make up his mind exactly what to do...so many places to see...he wants to do something fun....sounds like a good plan!

**Dave Conway** will be volunteering for a long time at Gold Beach campground in Rogue River National Forest near Medford, Oregon.

**Leonard and Sally Timm:** "Leonard and I plan to spend February & March exploring San Antonio and the Texas Gulf Coast. Then, we'll make our way to Aztec Ruins National Monument in NW New Mexico where we will volunteer as visitor center hosts during the months of May and June. "

**Ron & Jane Payne:** "After six rewarding years at BIBE, we've decided it will be an adventure to not return, leaving behind a community that resembles a family reunion. So our most immediate adventure will be to downsize, sell our house in central Ohio and move to a 'continuing care senior community' in the college town of Delaware, Ohio. No we are not all that old but 1.) neither of us wants to be the surviving spouse left with sole responsibility to clean up after 50++ years of marriage, and 2.) neither of us wants our children to be burdened or to have a decision regarding our whereabouts/care. If we discover that this adventure was a premature mistake, we'll let y'all know. "

**Doug and Kay Combs** are headed out to Glen Canyon NRA as usual to volunteer for the spring session there, then they will be going back to Michigan.

**Terry Brackeen** is going to stay fairly close to home this spring and summer. She plans to visit Padre Island and just relax in several Texas state parks.

**Robert and Glenda Overfelt:** "We're going home to Del Rio to concentrate on Robert's campaign for Val Verde County Judge and to welcome three new grand babies due between mid-April and late May. Glenda is going to miss seeing her beloved Sierra del Carmen's on a daily basis. As always, RGV and Big Bend hold a special place in our hearts. "

**Jep Robertson:** "I am headed to Tucson to do a 24 hour mountain bike race with my son, then a month in France where I will be teaching a seminar on Accounting then to Colorado for another stint as campground host at Rocky Mountain National Park."

**Wayne and Claudia Nicholson:** "Claudia and I will be guests for a while. First at least 3 weeks in Corpus where cousins and friends live, and Padre Island beckons. As the weather warms, we will head up to UVA (Charlottesville, VA) followed by visiting northern Virginia. Hopefully we can visit friends in Michigan UP."

## Events in the Area

**Saturday, February, 1—Pioneer Reunion** sponsored by BBNHA, 1-5 PM at the San Vicente ISD auditorium. Reservations are recommended - \$13.50 per person for members, \$15.00 for non-members. Call 477-2236 for more information.

**Thursday, February 6-Volunteer Community Potluck Supper** at the Panther Junction Community Room beginning at 6:30 pm. Bring a covered dish to share. We will begin serving at 6:30, but you are welcome to come at 6:00 pm to mingle. Iced tea will be provided.

**February 13-15 Chihuahuan Dirt Desert Fest**, Lajitas, Texas; Mountain bike event. Find out more at [www.desertsportstx.com/mountain-bike-event/](http://www.desertsportstx.com/mountain-bike-event/) Desert Sports, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Lajitas Resort and Big Bend National Park bring you, for the fourth year, a three-day festival geared to mountainbikers of every size, ability and adventure-readiness. Riders can choose from an exciting menu of guided rides on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, or try out the unique 2-day self-guided EPIC option; or wander on the open trails of the Big Bend Ranch State Park and Lajitas Golf Resort at leisure.

Terlingua artist (and one of our park employees often seen at the Maverick Entrance Station) **Mary Paloma Diesel** will be the featured artist for the month of February at the Gallery on the Square, 115 West Holland Ave. in Alpine. See her work and visit with Mary at a reception on Friday, February 14, from 5 to 7 pm.

**February 21-23– 28th Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering**, Alpine Texas. For more information see [www.cowboy-poetry.org](http://www.cowboy-poetry.org)

**Tuesday, February 25 Hiking Club Hike**— If you haven't taken a hiking club hike yet, this is a chance to visit with other volunteers and see something in the park that you might not see on your own. The hikes are moderate, not Olympic events. A van will leave from headquarters at 9 am and emailing Jane ([Jane\\_Brown@nps.gov](mailto:Jane_Brown@nps.gov)) to let her know that you are coming is a good idea, but not required. In February we will be hiking in the East District and I will send out an email with more information around Feb. 14.

March 1 -Rabies Clinic at PJ from 11am-12noon at the EMS building.

**Every Saturday** from 10am-2pm there is a Farmer's Market in the Terlingua Ghosttown. Beginning **Wed. Feb. 5** there will be a mid-week market from 5:30-7 pm. Local greens, eggs, gluten free bread and more.

The volunteer office has a set of hiking poles, binoculars, rain jackets, heavy coats, work gloves, work shirts, a good supply of brown slacks, two sleeping bags, two big backpacks, lots of daypacks, some household items and a bicycle that we are willing to loan to any volunteers for use during their stay at Big Bend, if they are available.